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ENTREPRENEURS 9/19/2016 @ 7:00AM | 9.364 views

## How SoulCycle, Amazon, And Reebok Are Leading The Way In Ecommerce



To be successful online, it's essential that brands focus on accommodating their users based on their unique needs and interests. Particularly for ecommerce brands, where customers are making a purchase online, the user-experience offered through website design is critical. A poor onsite experience could result in a decrease in sales and even the slightest onsite issues or inconveniences could result in a customer leaving the site and never returning.

In recent years, the ecommerce industry has experienced exponential changes. The growth of ecommerce itself has been immense, and more brands are shifting to an online focus with onsite capabilities that are becoming more and more advanced. For brands to stay relevant and up-to-date, it's essential that companies implement only the most innovative of tactics, and use strategic approaches to capture the interest of long term customers.

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*So, with the ecommerce industry evolving so quickly, what can you do to ensure that your own strategies are a step ahead of the rest?*

Certain design elements and functionalities are sure to be the “new normal” with ecommerce, and unfortunately, without them, it's quite

possible that your brand could fall behind. Below, I've compiled 6 innovative tactics to prepare your brand for the future of ecommerce, and some examples of top companies like SoulCycle, Reebok, and Amazon, all of which are doing a great job at implementing them:

### 1. Strategic User Pathways

Many ecommerce brands sell a variety of different goods online, and as a result, they have separate segments within their target audience. If companies have various groups as part of their audience, it's important that they identify the unique groups and understand each one's needs so that they can provide them with the most relevant content possible.

Too many ecommerce websites make the user dig for the specific products and brands that they need, but rather than digging for them, why not send users down different paths depending on what their respective needs might be?

When looking for a product on the Amazon website, the user is presented with various pathways, all tailored to the the product they are looking for. The navigation clearly labels the different sections of the website, making it easy for the user to discover the general product line that they're looking for. From there, they break down their products by offering strategic pathways that users can take depending on their needs. Consider the "Televisions & Video" section of their website, as seen below.



Amazon highlights their TV products by showcasing three definitive options that the user can select from based on their individual needs—type, screen size, and price. By clearly defining the different decision-making factors, the customers can navigate the website step-by-step to find the product that most closely fits their unique needs. Whatever factor is most important to the user, they can select the option that will present them with the products that they'll be most likely to purchase.

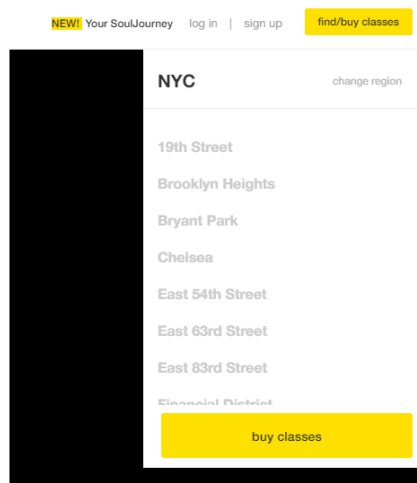
### 2. Monitor User Location with IP Tracking

IP tracking is a great way for ecommerce brands to leverage a customer's specific location in order to provide them with an optimized user experience with relevant information, products, and services to fit their geographic needs. An IP address allows marketers to track where their

visitors are coming from, and use that information to structure their ecommerce website to fit the individual interests and needs of all of their customers, no matter where they reside.

This technology gives brands a deeper insight into their audiences, and allows them to then provide those people with more valuable and relevant information based on where they are located. Likewise, the interests of customers can vary by region. Understanding where your clients are coming from, and how that can impact their specific needs, can help you to provide online visitors with relevant information, products, and resources based on their geographic location. This not only leads to a higher level of trust and credibility as an ecommerce website, but it leads to customers instilling more trust in your brand, making it easier for them to eventually convert.

A prime example of an effective use of IP tracking technology is on the SoulCycle website, as seen below.



When you go online to buy class credits, you are automatically presented with a customized list of different cycling studios within your area that is based on the specific location from which you are visiting the site. For a company like SoulCycle who is constantly growing and expanding with dozens of locations in New York City alone, having these options curated for each specific visitor makes the brand more approachable. It reduces a lot of the guess work for both new and returning customers, and optimizes their user experience by making it simple to purchase a credit and book a class at a nearby location.

### **3. Personalized Content Based on User Behavior**

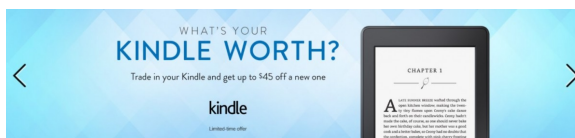
Optimizing the user experience to meet the needs

of individual users—not just a general audience—is quickly becoming the new normal with ecommerce brands.

Users are starting to expect more and more from brands in terms of understanding their needs as a customer. Similar to how SoulCycle uses the IP address of users to only show the fitness studios located nearest to them, the personalization of a CMS (content management system) based on user behavior in the past is an incredibly effective way for ecommerce brands to offer a highly relevant experience. There are various programs on the market that offer this sort of customization, and truth be told, they can make a massive difference in driving sales.

Like I mentioned above, the more relevant an experience is and the more tailored your marketing is to the needs of the customer, the more likely the user is to convert. If you're a jewelry brand, and through your onsite data you can see that a customer has purchased a pair of earrings from a set, showing them products such as necklaces or bracelets that also go with that set can help facilitate a sale. Ultimately, personalizing the user experience is becoming more and more paramount in the world of ecommerce today.

Amazon is a great example of this type of customization based on user behavior.



The rotating banner on the Amazon website is prominent and captures user attention with vivid imagery and concise messaging. As seen in the example above, customers that may have searched for a new Kindle but already own an older device model could be presented with a display highlighting a trade-in program specific to Kindle owners. This type of content is completely personalized to the individual user and with its incredibly high relevancy, it's likely to drive lots of conversions for the brand. If the company were to show a generic Kindle promotion, without highlighting the trade-in program, it would be less likely to drive sales as it would lose the interest of an existing Kindle owner unaware of the program they offer.

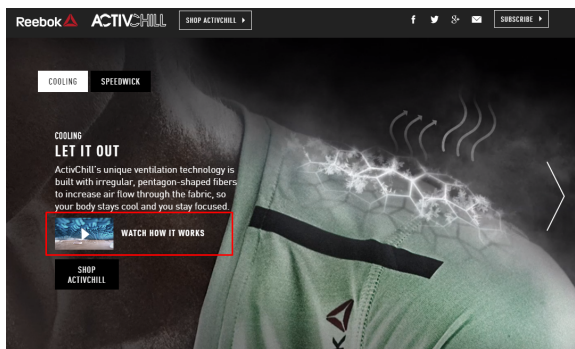
#### 4. User Engagement Features

Brands are beginning to understand the importance of showing potential customers how existing customers work with their products, wear their products, or use their products on a

daily basis. For nearly all brands within all industries, the ecommerce space can be competitive. It seems like every vertical has hundreds or even thousands of competitors trying to capture the interest and wallets of customers each day. To stay ahead as the ecommerce industry becomes even more advanced than it already is, it's essential that you differentiate what your brand has to offer and highlight the true value of your products.

It's one thing to show off your products or services when you're trying to encourage a sale, and sometimes that's enough to drive conversions, but that's not always the case. User engagement features that show how to actually use the products that a brand offers ultimately prove to the user that the purchase they're considering is a worthwhile one.

To highlight the idea of user engagement features, consider Reebok's line of active wear, ACTIVCHILL.



This particular product line differs from most in that it has special technology built into the fabric that allows the user to stay cool while they are wearing it. Instead of just leaving it to the description to tell the user how the product functions, the brand shows a user wearing the products and utilizes interactive elements to showcase the technology. Aside from the visuals, the potential customer can also watch a video to learn more about how the fabric increases air flow when they wear it.

This makes it a lot more likely for the user to make a purchase when they can blatantly see the value and understand how they will use it should they decide to make a purchase. Moving the user further down the marketing funnel with this sort of user engagement feature brings the customer that much closer to a conversion.

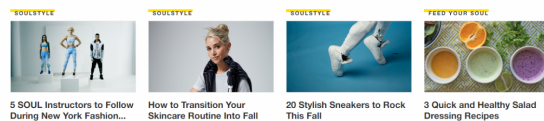
## 5. Resources with Value

As ecommerce websites continue to evolve, it is important for your online platform to serve a larger purpose to your audience. The ecommerce experience should no longer be about someone

simply visiting your website to make a purchase, and then immediately leaving. You want visitors to engage with your brand, and you want your company to be known for providing actual value to its users, not just goods and services.

Incorporating different resources into the design of your ecommerce website allows you to present visitors with valuable tools and information, without necessarily having those materials connect with a direct sale. You are providing these resources to your audience in order to enhance the overall value of your brand. Useful assets such as blogs, calculators, and videos add credibility to your business, engage users, and capture the interests of potential customers, which could ultimately lead to future sales.

SoulCycle's website provides a few helpful resources to their online audience without necessarily pushing those visitors to make a purchase while engaging with or utilizing these materials. They are purely meant for educational purposes, hoping to inform the user as they navigate their way through the website. The community section on their site delves into detail with content about sustaining an overall healthy lifestyle, without overly-promoting one of their classes.



From healthy recipes, to music choice, to fit fashion advice, SoulCycle offers their users a ton of value. This creates an educational and engaging experience that keeps users interested in the brand, without pressuring them into a direct purchase every time they visit the website.

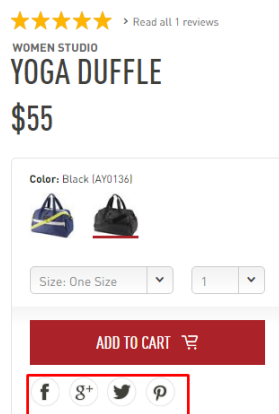
## 6. Social Media Integration

It should come as no surprise that social media is an integral part of the future of ecommerce. If your brand doesn't have an active and engaging online community, it's essential that you begin to establish one. The growth of social media as a primary marketing channel over the course of the last several years has been immense, and the trust that users have in social media is exponential.

First off, the integration of social media signals on your website is essential. Social media signals, or buttons, make it quite simple for the user to share an item on Facebook or Twitter, or even connect with the brand on their platform of choice. By integrating these symbols into the design of landing pages, product pages, or

individual blog posts, you're making it much more likely for the user to actually share the content with their peers, simultaneously extending the reach of your content.

On Reebok's website, if you're a fan of one of their products, with the click of a button, you can easily share the item across your social platforms.



User-generated content is another way to integrate social media into your website functionality. The idea of user-generated content has become quite important in the world of ecommerce, and is incredibly effective at instilling an added sense of trust in your products. Pictures, posts, or reviews that customers share on social platforms about your products are unbiased and therefore hold a lot more credibility than a post that your brand would share on its own. Highlighting this type of content and building it into the design of certain onsite pages can hold a lot of potential for companies to engage users, encourage them to share, and move them closer to a conversion.

### **Building An Ecommerce Brand For The Future**

The future of ecommerce is vast. If brands keep the idea of offering a phenomenal and relevant user experience at the forefront of their focus, they'll find it easier to convert users and retain customers on a long-term basis.

It's crucial to note that every company has a different target audience, complete with varying interests, habits, and demographics. It's important to use that behavioral data to provide a platform for users that most closely mirrors their own needs.

The above mentioned strategies are intended to guide your brand's tactical approach towards ecommerce and help prepare your website for the

growing expectations that users anticipate in the marketplace.

For more information about ecommerce design, visit [Blue Fountain Media](#) online.

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